help each other. If they are sometimes, indeed too often, fleeced by middlemen—and it would seem that the various European administrations, no matter what their nationality, should prevent such speculations in their own best interests—if the natives are fleeced, a European ignorant of the customs and the language would be fleeced all the more. Who would guard his herds during his absence; who would lead them to far markets if he stayed home? It is difficult to find a native [181] who can be fully trusted. At present, however, trading in livestock is the only possible source of profit in the country.

The forthcoming railroad will soon change trade conditions and promote the interests of the Europeans without undermining those of the natives. This is to be desired, because Mossi country will only come fully into its own when its products can be exported. The natives were too long isolated as a result of their continuous warfare, and the nabas, it must be said, were too inclined to monopolize all the goods, for trade to develop in a significant way. The French peace, by making the roads safe, has already done much for the country; it will achieve even more when the railroad which is now cutting across Mossi country links it on the one hand to the Ivory Coast and on the other hand to the Niger Colony. Trade will then no longer be carried out exclusively with the Germans and the British, and as soon as native products find sure channels of export, the raising of livestock and agriculture itself will be greatly extended. The Mossi are not averse to trade. [181 They actually seem to possess a real knack for it, which until now 439] they have had no opportunity to exercise freely. They have not yet taken full advantage of their transactions, and this is why they seemed to some observers to have no aptitude for trade. They will adapt to it, as they already are.

/65/ Chapter 3. Hygiene, Disease, Death, and Burial

828 Part of life, especially the life of a Black, is spent in sleep, but 774 the slumberer is sometimes disturbed by dreams that are more or less 787 extraordinary. The Mossi attribute dreams to ancestral and other spirits. They also say that the soul leaves the body during sleep and does the things witnessed in the dream. Sorcerers are consulted to find out what caused the dreams and how to cope with the bad omens.

527 victorious heroes that they were only mortals. The thought of death is wholesome and beneficial.

The "bean feast" is so named because on that day the naba eats bean sauce for the first time in the year.

The naba's hoeing ceremony (na-kobo) is celebrated twenty-one days after the previous one, and like it, like the naky, always on a Saturday. When the naba of Koupéla was solemnly invested by the naba of Bélousa, he used to go with a large number of horsemen and much pomp to hoe a field located some distance from Koupéla. Nowadays he merely breaks ground on a path which connects his huts with those of his two prime ministers. He gives the first blows with the [526] hoe to the sound of drums, and his men take up from there. If the Peul and the horsemen have come in sufficient numbers, they run [273] races. As is usual in such circumstances, beer flows freely, and at the end of the day everyone is drunk. These festivities bring the naba a few thousand cowries offered by his subjects.

000 There ceremonies, naky, nakobo, do they not constitute a sort of homage to agriculture, do they not recall similar festivities celebrated long ago by the Romans and even today by the Chinese?

443 The market which follows each of these feasts is always crowded. Several beeves and large numbers of sheep are killed. Everyone makes a point of attending in his very best clothes, and the sight of this motley crowd is quite interesting indeed.

Chapter 3. Magic

000 Mgr. Le Roy, as already mentioned, defines magic as "the art of coercing into one's service the forces of nature, or harnessing the powers of the invisible world, through certain occult practices of a more or less religious character." This is what we shall now study. To put some order into a subject which is wholly lacking in it in the mind of the native, we shall first discuss the superstitions, then the sorcerers.

[181] Like all primitive people, black or white, the Mossi are very superstitious. Were not our own ancestors, in the Middle Ages? Have superstitious beliefs, such as those concerning thirteen people at table,

77/ It would seem that living as they do in the midst of spirits who
157 permeate the air, the earth, the fire, the houses, the fields, and everything else, and who are not always in an accommodating mood, the Mossi would live in a perpetual state of terror since they have everything to fear from the poisoners during the day, the seuya during the night, but this is not the case. The Mossi are a light-hearted people; they like to laugh, and they do not look a bit worried. Once, as I pointed this out to an old man, he replied: "Everyone does not have enemies. And then, why worry about the inevitable?" In fact, those dreadful sorcerers are only to be feared by those who know that they have an enemy and that he can resort to the power of the sorcerers. The spirits are pacified with sacrifices, and if a soul is seized at night by a seuya, the only thing to do is to try one's best to release it.

Furthermore, like so many others, the Mossi easily forget all these beliefs in the course of everyday life and act as if they were masters of their own actions and confident of achieving their goals. Laughingly and playfully they toss sticks and stones at the wind eddies that whirl by, stirring up the dust and dry leaves. And yet, how many spirits and sorcerers may they conceal, each more dreadful than the next! The most ardent believers consult sorcerers and offer sacrifices before every undertaking; the others only bother with sacrifices on the Day of the Dead and when misfortune strikes. Is it not suffering that recalls us to the religious life, because it reminds us of our dependence on a power greater than ours? Here as elsewhere, there are ardent and lukewarm believers; no one seems to be indifferent, and atheism is unknown. They are not yet sufficiently civilized for such ideas!

000 Their conversion to Catholicism seems to be only a matter of time. Messis quidem multa, operarii autem pauci. /The harvest is great, but the workers are few./ May the Master of the Harvest dispatch many workers to this land and hasten the day when the whole of this people will enter the divine fold!

/108/ CONCLUSION

181 By way of conclusion, we shall now attempt to draw in rough outline the mental characteristics of the Mossi as we see them.

181 577 674 The Mossi are a mixture of defects and qualities. As a rule they are not overly scrupulous about stealing and lying, but these deficiencies are not so deeply rooted that they could not be corrected with the development of a more refined conscience. The Mossi are thievish because they often have the opportunity to take what belongs to others, especially cowries which are handled in a very intricate manner. It is so easy, when counting cowries, to slip a few into a pocket without the master's notice! There are some highway robbers, who are greatly feared, and many of them are very skillful. They are, of course, a very small minority.

181 577 426 Debts are the most frequent cause of theft. As a rule every Mossi is both a debtor and a creditor, and when he borrows only God knows when he will repay. If someone owes him a debt, he borrows, saying, "So-and-So owes me such-and-such an amount; when he pays me back, I will repay you," and he always finds someone who is willing to lend. Who can deny a friend such a favor? In order to be repaid numerous steps will prove necessary, and the day when the sum is refunded will be a happy one. This shortcoming is so ingrained among them that the wealthiest people are not exempt from it, and although able to return what they have borrowed without difficulty, they do not return it.

181 577 The Mossi lie easily, but they especially practice the method of mental reservation. When questioned, they excel at posing another question, to find out whether their questioner is really acquainted with the facts. If they can mislead one, they do; on the other hand, if they feel that to confess would be to their advantage, they do so even if their confession implicates their accomplices; but they only do so if they are quite sure of coming through safely.

The Mossi are not false or deceitful, but they often fail to tell the truth for fear of displeasing a more powerful person. They try to guess the reply expected by their questioner, and much caution is needed when a precise piece of information is required. They also deceive by telling only half the truth; when queried, they sometimes reply to a question but suppress a detail which would have modified the answer or opened the way to another question.

They are discreet and know how to keep a secret, especially the king's secrets. When they do not wish to tell anything, they say "I don't know." This is not incriminating, and it cuts short any prying question.

181 /109/ The Mossi have passions, and they are the same as ours:
152 ambition, jealousy, gluttony, sloth, lust, and sometimes even avarice, though more rarely. All of these reign among them. Because they cannot control their emotions, cannot resist their evil inclinations, these passions become tyrannical as they grow older. The children are usually quite malleable. The spirit of obedience and complete submission to their parents is instilled into them from such an early age that when taken sufficiently young their character can be trained and they become capable of truly virtuous actions which cost them an effort. When left to themselves, however, they listen only to their own desires and seek out whatever can bring them some satisfaction. This is rather similar to the morality of a slave who fears only the whip.

The Mossi are vain and easily offended by a word they have misunderstood, even when spoken in jest. The practice of humility is far from being one of their habitual pursuits. The Mossi are quarrelsome and testy, especially when they have drunk a little more millet beer than they should have. There are no festivities and few markets of any importance where a quarrel does not arise among some natives, often for no better reason than because someone is jostled in the crowd. The brawl begins with insults, proceeds with clubs, and ends up with knives. No one gives way. A Mossi who gave way in a quarrel would feel dishonored. The man who gives in proves that he is the weakest, and at the first opportunity someone who witnessed the incident will insult him in turn. Why not, since he does not defend himself? This is why a Mossi who has been abused will give in only at the final extremity, especially if his father and mother were insulted, and all cursing soon gets to this point. When drawn apart, the opponents keep up their invectives at a distance. An angry Mossi loses all control. A quarrel often has its aftermath. The Mossi are spiteful, and, especially if they were placed in the weaker position, they will seek revenge in one way or another, so it cannot be said that they got the worst of it.

181 Not only do the Mossi have passions like ours, but like us they also
157 have their temperaments. There are the lymphatic ones, languid and incapable of any effort; there are the nervous people who are always in motion, sensitive to a fault, who weep at the slightest remark; there are the taciturn ones who almost never laugh, who think that no one loves them and that everyone wants to hurt them, who like solitude and

181 who speak little; there are the choleric people, more liable than others
157 to anger, more spiteful, but also endowed with more energy.

Energy is not the chief quality of these people, who are trained by
181 their leaders to blind and faithful obedience. The tight organization
156 we have described has its unhappy consequences, atrophy of the will and destruction of the spirit of initiative. Such is the price. A Mossi cannot resist those who are more powerful. Flexible and almost cowardly before his superiors, he makes up for it with his inferiors and shows great arrogance and disdain toward those who are weaker.

181 /110/ The Mossi do not exercise their will, and they do not exer-
153 cise their thinking faculty. This is not because they lack intelligence, but because they are not accustomed to thought except when their interests are at stake, at which time some of them demonstrate true intelligence and diplomacy.

The Mossi do not question the why of things. While small children in our country like to argue and often perplex us with their questions, the Mossi never ask themselves, "How can this be? Why is it so and not otherwise?" The first answer that comes to mind satisfies them.

This lack of thought is the cause of their lagging civilization, for is it not true that we move forward unceasingly only because we seek to investigate the cause of everything? It also results in a paucity of ideas. Conversations turn mainly upon women, food, and agriculture during the rainy season. Their sphere of ideas is quite restricted, but it is capable of expansion, for the Mossi may be considered quite intelligent.

539 If proverbs express the wisdom of a people, the Mossi certainly do not lack wisdom and often couch it with great subtlety. Permit us to prove this by quoting a few proverbs, culled in the course of conversations by Fr. Thueux, who kindly conveyed them to us and who gathered explanations, since some of them are real enigmas to our European minds.

1. Kota ningri, ka kot' sen kong'ye.
   Give above you, not below.
   (If you give to someone who is more powerful, you will always get something out of it.)
2. Maokasankaré ñarda kon lo'é naobi taoré.
   No matter how much it may hurry, the heel never catches up with the toes.
   (Who is the hen to sing before the rooster?)

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15. Sosra sen kaosda, wata ne korg' wenbsego.
When a conversation lingers, the bag is fingered.
(Familiarity breeds contempt.)

16. Pu' pidya, bango luéya.
Full belly, gagged indiscretion.
(Those who need you are discreet).

17. Sad' no' o, yid noa' karga.
A good laugh is better than a chicken leg.
(A warm reception is better than a good meal.)

18. Ned' kon wok' a bâka, ti pemsom yi ye.
You don't cut open your shoulder just for the air to come out.
(Never abandon a friend in need.)

19. Bunbundi ka dod' zaloï'n yé.
Those who give their best do not go away empty-handed.
(Work hard, do your best, there is no lack of true wealth.)

●181 153 The Mossi likes to talk. Although he has few ideas of his own, if one knows how to make use of his familiar experiences to bring him to a higher level, he follows the reasoning easily, understands quite promptly what is told him, and grasps the train of ideas and even the finer gradations of meaning. In short, he has quite a noteworthy aptitude for assimilation. Often I explained to a chief in broad outline the handling of a gun or the mechanism of a watch or bicycle. If an outsider came by, the naba relayed the explanations to show that he was intelligent and that he had grasped them properly. Indeed, I was often surprised at how well most of them did this.

They like pictures. At first they often hold them upside down, but a few explanations are usually sufficient to make them grasp their meaning. First they recognize familiar things, such as people, horses, dogs, and trees, and they explain them to each other. They come to understand the scene and the reasons for the attitudes of the figures pictured.

181 522 576 /112/ In conversations, when they are not ill at ease, they are lively, merry, and they like to laugh. It is a compliment on their part when they say that someone laughs easily. They are sometimes humorous, they understand innuendoes, but they know how to keep their distance and do not permit themselves any familiarities, even in words, toward their superiors.

181 153 They are very susceptible to teaching. The little slaves raised in Malta learned the French language well, and all those who have met them say that they are quite intelligent. We had children in our school who quicly learned writing, reading, and arithmetic, and who did not forget what they had learned when they got married and had to leave school to work in the fields. Reading remains a pastime to them, and they keep up their knowledge of the French language. We did not notice among them what has so often been pointed out about the little Arabs, who give great promise when young, signs of real intelligence, and who do not live up to this promise when they grow up. The intelligence of the Mossi develops with the years, and this would make it possible to exercise considerable influence over them. 080 Teaching that opens their minds, however, should not cause them to lose their religious sense without contributing anything in its place. Within a short period of time this would bring about the demoralization and downfall of this people who seem capable of rapid progress, and it would be a pity.

538 They like to tell fables, and a volume of Mossi literature could easily be compiled by gathering the historical legends, proverbs, and fables which are to be found among this people. As an example, we shall now recount a few stories we have been told. As in all primitive tales, animals play the role of intelligent actors. The Romaunt of the Rose has long since familiarized us with this kind of literature.

The Bad Vulture and the White Hawk

539 A bald vulture was wandering about the bush. A white hawk came by and said to the vulture, "Why have you nothing to eat?" The vulture replied, "It is true, I have nothing to eat. May God help me find something." The hawk said, "God cannot give people enough food to satisfy their hunger." The vulture answered, "If God does not give me something to eat, I shall not eat."

The white hawk saw a dove alighting on a stick. The hawk swooped down upon her, but the stick pierced his breast and came out behind his head. The vulture came and ate the hawk.

539 The goat replied, "The hyena should give all of herself." The lion told the hyena to remove her own leg. The hyena bit herself. It hurt, and she ran away. The lion caught her and killed her. The goat ran away with his salt and went home.

This is why the hyena attacks livestock.

181 576 The Mossi are polite. This is the quality that first strikes all those who have dealings with them. We mentioned earlier that the natives always greet one another. In fear of their nabas, the Mossi maintain before them a respectful, almost humiliating posture. They are very attentive to important outsiders and see to it that they should lack nothing a Mossi might wish: a sitting stool and mat are brought in immediately along with the drink; the food is abundant and usually clean and carefully prepared.

181 574 The Mossi are very hospitable and willingly give alms for its own sake, that is, to poor people who cannot repay. They are generous and always share with their neighbors, and when they have millet beer, they hand it out liberally. No woman who is brewing beer would allow a stranger of some importance to go by without offering him a gourdful, and she is displeased if he refuses. An object once offered is never retrieved, and stratagems must be used to make a native take back under some pretext what he has given away.

576 /114/ The Mossi always offer things with the right hand. It is an insult to pass the gourd or to take it with the left hand. The oldest person in a group helps himself from a dish first, and all those present follow in order of seniority, down to the youngest. On the other 264 hand, the eldest stops eating first, and it is the youngest who eats the 27 last bits and cleans the gourd. When drinking, however, the most eminent person drinks the last drop.

576 574 Children do not greet their parents in the home, because it is their home; but if a properly brought-up girl sees her mother coming with a full jar or a basket, she rushes to take the load from her, even if the woman is only a few yards from the soukala. When a friend has come to visit, it is considered good manners to carry her load for some distance when she leaves. In any case, visitors are always seen on their way, sometimes to the outskirts of the village.

576 The Mossi do not lack tact and sensibility. When they want something, they first delegate a friend with a gift, then send word that they have a small matter to discuss; sometimes they hint at what it may be and leave without waiting for an answer. Some time later

576 they send their friend once again to indicate what they desire, or they go and bring up the matter themselves.

181 577 Being sensitive and capable of attachment, even of affection, the Mossi readily acknowledge the good done to them and seek to express their gratitude. If they can offer a gift, such as eggs, millet, honey, a chicken, they offer it unobtrusively. "Take this millet for your horse; give this chicken to your child." If they have nothing to give, they watch for every opportunity to spare their benefactor work or trouble. They take the hoe from him to weed his field or help him lift a load. They show their gratitude as they can, through action rather than words.

181 46 The Mossi are not lazy. As a rule it may even be said that they like work. Lazy people are pointed at, avoided, and despised. During the winter season everyone must be in the fields from morning to night, men, women and children alike. Only those who cannot work or who have household tasks to perform stay home. The Mossi work very hard at this time of year. During the dry season, on the other hand, they enjoy some leisure. Although most of them weave during these months or travel for trading purposes, while the children cut grass to thatch the roofs and the millet is threshed, it must be said that it is not possible to work in these sun-scorched lands as it is in our temperate European countries. Besides, why work when there are so few outlets? Since the time when the French peace made the roads safe, trade has been on the upsurge. Now, sure of reaping the fruit of their toil, the natives are expanding their crops and every year the fields encroach further upon the bush. All the important villages are surrounded with cultivated fields as far as the eye can reach. If the Mossi do not work more then they do, therefore, it is not from laziness but from /115/ lack of outlets. It seems likely that the country will develop quite rapidly as soon as channels of communication open it to European trade.

181 Such are, in succinct and impartial outline, the qualities and defects of this people. Which of the two preponderate? It is for the reader to judge. In our opinion the Mossi are a very worthy people capable of a brilliant future, but under one condition, that they become Christians. Their most striking characteristics, as we have stated over and again, are their religious sense and their absolute submission to all that bears the stamp of authority.

11: Skinner .E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
FA28 Mossi FA28

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VI

WARFARE

The Mossi were proud of their warrior tradition, which had earned them their several kingdoms, principalities, and districts. Even the least district chief had stories about the wars in which his ancestors had wrested their territories from aboriginal populations. These traditions of conquest legitimized to a large extent the power of the Mossi kings and chiefs, who never hesitated to use force in order to obtain tribute, to maintain their rule, and to enforce their authority. The Mossi value fighting ability so highly that even today, when fighting is no longer necessary, most Mossi males in the rural areas carry sticks and other weapons on their shoulders as symbols of manhood. In their view, every man should know how to fight and should be able to defend his village, his district, and his kingdom.

According to tradition, the northward thrust of the Mossi warriors during the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries carried them into the region of the Niger River bend. Here, around A.D. 1329, the Yatenga Mossi attacked and sacked the town of Timbuktu, which belongs to the Mali. When Mali was on the decline during the early fifteenth century, the Mossi again attacked its towns. According to the *Tarikh es-Sudan*, when the Mali ruler appointed Amin-ben-Ahmad jurisconsul of Timbuktu,

> the sultan of the Mossi led an expedition against Benka. The population of that region went out to engage the enemy, and at that time left others sitting around El Hadj. He pronounced certain words on the millet which was being served and asked those around him to eat of it. All of them ate except the son-in-law of El Hadj, who did not because he was related to him. "Now go and fight," said the holy man, "and you will have nothing to fear from the weapons of the enemy." All, in effect, returned safe and sound, and only those persons who did not eat the millet died in the battle. The king of the Mossi was routed, and his troops were chased without having seized anything from the people of Benka. All this thanks to the protection of the blessed person.[1]

Later, the Mossi attacked towns of the Songhai empire whenever they felt strong enough, only to be driven away later by a stronger adversary. Sa'di describes a Mossi incursion into the Songhai empire as follows:

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
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VII

THE ECONOMIC FOUNDATION

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THE REVENUE for the support of the Mossi chiefs and their governmental system came from many sources in a variety of forms. The Mossi of Ouagadougou held that "the Mogho Naba is master of everything" (*Mogh Nab n so fa*), and when they referred to the control he and his chiefs exercised over their goods and services, they said, "The commoner rears his livestock for the chief," and cited the proverb "The snake gets whatever is in the belly of the frog."

651 423 [181] [427]

Since the Mossi were, and still are, primarily an agricultural people, the products of the soil were the main source of revenue. The Mossi chiefs did not own the land, but they controlled it and assigned land rights to their subjects. The Mossi believed that land had no value apart from people, and, conversely, that people could not exist without land. As they said, "Land is the mother; it fed the ancestors of this generation; it feeds the present generation and its children; and it provides the final resting place for all men." Therefore, a Mossi chief never hesitated to give anyone permission to use unoccupied land. It was in his interest to do so, because the more subjects he commanded, the greater were his revenue and prestige. An unpopular chief was censured not by a withholding of tribute and presents, but by a mass exodus of his subjects to another area.

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Through the administrative hierarchy, the common people contributed to the support of the various levels of government. The Mogho Naba periodically received agricultural produce from all his subjects. Through the village chiefs, the village people sent part of their produce to the district chiefs, who forwarded it to the provincial ministers. They, in turn, delivered it to the central government during a ceremony appropriately called "Soretasgho" ("completion of the road"). This event occurred at the end of the harvest festival, after all the crops had been gathered in.[1]

To open the ceremony, the provincial governors' retainers began to clear the paths leading from the governors' compounds to the palace, for they had